AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

The following listing of claims supersedes all prior versions and listings of claims in this application:

1.-2. (Canceled).

3.   (Currently Amended) A method of controlling access to a communications resource in which capacity made available to each of a plurality of users is limited to a maximum value which bears an inverse relationship to a measure, made over a previous period, of usage of that resource relative to usage made by other members of the said plurality of users, said method comprising:

using a measuring means to obtain a measurement of the usage that each member of the plurality of users made of the resource made by each member of the plurality of users over a predetermined period,

using a sorting means to place each member of the plurality of users that currently requires access have active connections to the resource in a rank order relative to one another, the ranking being made according to the measurements, made using the measurement means, of the usage that made by each member made of the resource,

using a calculating means to apply a restriction factor to each user according to that user's position in the rank order and how many users currently require access, thereby restricting

availability of the resource to each of the plurality of users that currently ~~requires access~~ have active connections to the resource,

wherein the restriction factors allocated to adjacently ranked users differ by a ratio which is constant over all users.

4.-10.   (Canceled).

11.   (Currently Amended) A method of controlling access to a communications resource in which capacity made available to each of a plurality of users is limited to a maximum value which bears an inverse relationship to a measure, made over a previous period, of usage of that resource relative to usage made by other members of the said plurality of users, said method comprising:

using a measuring means to obtain a measurement of the usage that each member of the plurality of users made of the resource ~~made by each member of the plurality of users~~ over a predetermined period,

using a sorting means to place each member of the plurality of users that currently have active connections ~~requires access~~ to the resource in a rank order relative to one another, the ranking being made according to the measurements, made using the measurement means, of the usage ~~made by~~ that each member made of the resource,

using a calculating means to apply a restriction factor to each user according to that user's

position in the rank order and how many users currently require access, thereby restricting

availability of the resource to each of the plurality of users that currently ~~requires access~~ have

active connections to the resource.

12.   (Currently Amended) Apparatus for controlling access to a communications

resource having means for allocating capacity to each of a plurality of users in inverse

relationship to a measure, made over a previous period, of usage of that resource relative to

usage made by other members of the said plurality of users, said apparatus comprising:

measuring means for measuring the usage that each member of the plurality of users

made of the resource ~~made by each member of the plurality of users~~ over a predetermined

period,

sorting means for ranking each member of the plurality of users that currently ~~requires~~

~~access~~ have active connections to the resource in a rank order relative to one another, the ranking

being made according to the measurements, made using the measurement means, of the usage

~~made by~~ that each member made of the resource,

calculation means for calculating a restriction factor to each member of the plurality of

users that currently ~~requires access~~ have active connections to the resource according to that

user's position in the rank order and how many users currently require access to the resource.

13. (New) A method according to claim 11, in which the restriction factor allocated to the user having made the least usage over the previous period is unity.

14. (New) Apparatus according to claim 12, associated with a modem associated with a server controlling access to the internet.

15. (New) Apparatus according to claim 12, associated with a switching system for controlling access to an internet service provider.

16. (New) A method according to claim 11, in which each user is given a unique ranking.

17. (New) Apparatus according to claim 12 in which the sorting means is arranged to give a unique ranking to each said user requiring access.